

## Tensions and confrontations of LIBRAS teacher training in higher education

Tensões e enfrentamentos da formação dos professores de LIBRAS no ensino superior

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### Abstract

The education of the Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) teacher is a process that is still under construction in Brazil. This work is an excerpt from a master's research that aims to present and problematize the tensions and strangeness that are presented between the place occupation of teaching LIBRAS by deaf and hearing professionals. Also, the insertion of the language as a discipline in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and its developments is considered, as well as the perspectives regarding the continuing training of LIBRAS teachers. Methodologically, qualitative research is proposed, in which the data were produced from listening to the training narratives of six LIBRAS teachers of two HEIs in *Rio Grande do Sul*, composed by three deaf and three hearing teachers, analyzed from the Content Analysis (BARDIN, 2016). Thus, it is understood that, although there is the prioritization of the deaf in the formation of LIBRAS teachers and in the teaching of this language, there is a need for specific training for such action which justifies the presence of hearing teachers duly qualified occupying this position in Higher Education Institutions. Finally, it is believed that, as one traverses a universe crossed by meanings constructed throughout the history of deafness and of the teacher's own training, it is possible to recognize the advances and needs in relation to the theme.

**Keywords:** Higher education. Training teachers. Brazilian Sign Language.

### Resumo

A formação do professor de Língua Brasileira de Sinais (LIBRAS) é um processo que ainda se encontra em construção no Brasil. Esse trabalho é um recorte de uma pesquisa de mestrado que tem o objetivo de apresentar e problematizar as tensões e estranhamentos que se apresentam entre a ocupação do lugar de docência da LIBRAS por profissionais surdos e ouvintes. Também, pondera-se a inserção da língua como disciplina nas Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES) e seus desdobramentos, bem como as perspectivas referentes à formação continuada de professores de LIBRAS. Metodologicamente, propõe-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, em que os dados foram produzidos a partir da escuta das narrativas de formação de seis professores de LIBRAS de duas IES do Rio Grande do Sul, sendo eles três surdos e três ouvintes e analisados a partir da Análise de Conteúdo (BARDIN, 2016). Assim,

compreende-se que, embora haja a priorização dos surdos na formação de professores de LIBRAS e na docência dessa língua, há a necessidade de formação específica para tal atuação, o que justifica a presença de docentes ouvintes devidamente capacitados ocupando esse cargo em IES. Por fim, acredita-se que, ao se percorrer um universo atravessado por significados construídos ao longo da história da surdez e da própria formação docente, é possível reconhecer os avanços e as necessidades com relação à temática.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino superior. Formação docente. Língua Brasileira de Sinais.

## Introduction

Teacher training is an extremely important subject, as it demarcates the historical changes related to its understanding, considering that each generation, each era and each culture endows education with the meanings it manages to build/establish. In this sense, it can be said that it is a broad, deep topic and of general interest to those who are directly linked to educational institutions. For Nóvoa (1991), teacher training, or teacher education, must be centered on student learning in its plurality, it must pay attention to the personal dimensions and always be permeated by principles of social responsibility.

When the specificity of teacher education concerns the teaching of Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS), the subject assumes a cut permeated by the uniqueness of the theme. Given the recognition of LIBRAS in Brazil as a language of communication and expression for Brazilian deaf people (Law No. 10,436/02), it has become essential to think about teacher training for language teaching for both deaf and hearing people (BRASIL, 2002).

LIBRAS was recognized by Federal Law No. 10,436, of April 24, 2002, and its Article 1st establishes “the Brazilian Sign Language and other expression resources associated with it as a legal means of communication and expression” (BRASIL, 2002). Article 3rd of the aforementioned Law provides that:

[...] LIBRAS should be included as a mandatory curricular subject in teacher training courses for teaching at secondary and higher levels, and in Speech-Language Pathology courses, in teaching institutions, public and private, in the federal education system and in the education systems in the States, Federal District and the Municipalities (BRASIL, 2002).

The regulations built around LIBRAS have favored certain rights for deaf people, such as, for example, the social inclusion of the deaf in different spaces. In the meantime, teacher education is an important tool, since the foundations of inclusive education are based, among others, on teacher education. Therefore, in this work, the training of LIBRAS teachers, deaf and hearing, will be discussed believing that it reflects in the effectiveness, quality and guarantee of these rights.

Thus, this writing is an excerpt of a master’s research completed in 2017 at UFSM<sup>1</sup>, which sought to know how deaf and hearing subjects became LIBRAS teachers, as well as what knowledge mobilized in their practices and the imaginary meanings that accompanied them on this path. However, the outline presented here aims to present and discuss the tensions and estrangements that arise between the occupation of the

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<sup>1</sup> CORRÊA, L. B. Trajetos formativos de docentes de LIBRAS do ensino superior: dentre saberes e significações. PPGTEP. UFSM. 2017. The work followed the ethical guidelines in the research, was approved with the number **CAAE:** 54945616.0.0000.5574.



teaching position of this language by deaf and hearing professionals.

Such tensions appeared during the process of analyzing the research data, in which it was noticed that there was a great emphasis on prioritizing deaf teachers in the occupation of teaching positions and a certain discomfort on the part of deaf professionals with the presence of hearing teachers. In the narratives of the hearing teachers, there was also concern about the topic. Thus, we sought to understand which imaginary meanings move this tension.

Therefore, the search for dissertations and theses based on the theme of LIBRAS teacher training was used as a theoretical basis as a way to discuss the data produced by listening to deaf (3) and hearing (3) LIBRAS teachers from two public institutions of higher education in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

## Methodology

The universe of the training paths of LIBRAS teachers in higher education is explored, seeking to know how they were constituted teachers, which knowledge mobilized in their practices and the imaginary meanings that moved them until the moment they found themselves, using, for this, the formation narratives. The article has a qualitative bias and, to preserve the identity of the interviewees, names of some colors<sup>2</sup> were used to describe their contributions.

Therefore, when delimiting the research project, bibliographical research was carried out with which we sought to map existing writings in Brazil, within the *stricto sensu* post-graduate course, in order to investigate existing productions with the focus on the theme of LIBRAS teacher training.

In this sense, the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations - BDTD<sup>3</sup> was searched, on January 29, 2016, with the descriptors "Training", "Teachers" and "LIBRAS", produced between 2009 and 2015. At the time, it was found a sample of twenty researches, two theses and eighteen dissertations, of which, after reading their abstracts, it was understood that only four referred specifically to the training of LIBRAS teachers in Higher Education, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – State of Art 1

Author/Production	Title	Year
Rebouças, L. S. Dissertation	The priority of deaf teachers to teach the subject Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) in higher education institutions after decree 5626/2005	2009
Albres, N. de A. Theses	Dialogical relationships between deaf teachers about the teaching of LIBRAS	2014
Agapito, F. M. Dissertation	Formation of deaf teachers who work in the city of Imperatriz-MA	2015
Carvalho, D. J. Dissertation	It is not enough to be deaf to be a teacher: the practices that constitute being a teacher in the space of inclusion	2016

<sup>2</sup> It is used DC (deaf collaborator) and HC (hearing collaborator) followed by a color name to identify the collaborators of this research, being Yellow, Red and Beige the deaf collaborators; Green, Brown and Lilac are the hearing collaborators.

<sup>3</sup> Website - <https://bdttd.ibict.br>



Font: Authors (2021).

On October 20, 2021, the same BDTD website was consulted again with the same descriptors, but with the temporal interval from 2015 to 2021, seeking to update the data of *stricto sensu* productions. On that occasion, it was possible to compute nine productions involving the theme “training”, “teachers” and “LIBRAS”. We also found in this search the dissertation that gave rise to this article, however, we discarded it in the calculation of the evaluated productions. However, after analyzing their abstracts and objectives, it is understood that those that best fit the objective of this research were the works cited in Table 2.

Table 2 – State of Art 2

Author/Production	Title	Year
Castro, F. G. A. S. de Dissertation	Teacher training and the constitution of the deaf teacher who works with LIBRAS in higher education	2016
Penha, N. M. da Dissertation	Deaf teacher: training through philosophy and the constitution of a pedagogical space	2017

Font: Authors (2021).

After analyzing the results of the research found, in 2016, it was noticed the absence of hearing LIBRAS teachers in higher education as collaborators/researched. Although their presence is recognized in some way in research, and also in institutions, they were not part of any of them.

When returning to the search, back in 2021, the data showed that these collaborators are still not present, except in the research that originated this article. For this reason, they were included as collaborators and it is understood the importance of problematizing the data produced, even today.

The intention was not, a priori, to delve into the discussion of deaf teacher versus hearing teacher, as we understand that this is a delicate and complex territory with numerous particularities. However, during the first interview, he already came across indicators of tensions and confrontations related to the occupation of the LIBRAS teaching function/position by deaf or hearing professionals. That is, the achievement of this place is linked to the condition of deaf or hearing person.

As there were repetitions of the theme in other narratives, the present authors felt challenged to make some reflections on the matter, considering that Content Analysis was used in the perspective of Bardin (2016) for data analysis. These considerations revolved around the main focus of the work, which are knowledge and meanings, limited to the speeches of collaborators and authors/researchers who have already discussed, such as Rebouças (2009), Albres (2016), Carvalho (2016) and Penha (2017), among others.

Allied to the authors, Castoriadis (1982) is brought in, in an attempt to analyze the imaginary meanings related to the tensions that gave rise to this text. It should be noted that the intention is not to attribute a comparative value judgment – better or worse than – between deaf and hearing teachers, but only to reflect on some possibilities that led/lead to this confrontation.



## Data discussion

For purposes of better organization and clarity of the text, this topic will be divided into three parts, namely: 1 - From nodes to meanings, in which tensions between deaf and hearing teachers are discussed; 2 - LIBRAS, teaching and possibilities, in which the insertion of language as a discipline and its consequences is considered; and 3 - Continuing Education of LIBRAS Teachers, which discusses some perspectives.

### 1 - From nodes to meanings

This topic intends to discuss the data produced through the narratives of collaborators, deaf and hearing people, bringing them closer to research from the state of the art and other authors who, in the present understanding, can provide theoretical and epistemological support for reflection.

In this sense, the analysis of the findings will begin with reference to the master's research by Rebouças (2009), which culminated in the dissertation entitled "The priority of deaf teachers to teach the subject Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) in higher education institutions after Decree 5626/2005", presented to the Postgraduate Course in Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University of Bahia.

The referred work aimed to "understand the current problems related to the teaching of LIBRAS as a compulsory subject in the Speech Therapy, Literature and Pedagogy courses in Brazilian HEIs after the decree 5626/05" (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 77). To this end, it sought to "evidence the theoretical, legal and empirical foundations of the priority of deaf instructors and teachers for teaching LIBRAS in HEIs to support this professional segment in the understanding and defense of their rights" (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 77), as well as "gathering arguments and data that serve to broaden the perspective of Education professionals on the existence, relevance and participation of the Deaf Community in Deaf Education [and] raise the offer of the LIBRAS discipline in higher education courses in Brazil" (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 77). To situate the reader, the author begins by reporting her experience with Libras, which took place at the age of 12, being profoundly bilaterally deaf, diagnosed at a year and a half (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 31); her life trajectory and education that led her to work as a LIBRAS teacher in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Bahia.

Regarding the main focus of the work, the author begins by saying that she considers it important to include the LIBRAS discipline in the training courses for teachers and speech therapists and adds that "the Brazilian deaf community already has a significant number of deaf graduates and post-graduates, and with PROLIBRAS certificates. Even so, many HEIs do not accept deaf people as teachers, alleging communication difficulties" (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 43). She goes on to point out that:

[...] critically appreciating this situation, I cannot help but assume that, in reality, HEIs want to avoid costs with interpreters when they avoid hiring deaf teachers. [And that] thus, the choice of hearing teachers to teach LIBRAS can only be understood for economic reasons. I am not dealing with an opposition between the deaf and the hearing community. What I want to discuss is the quality of teaching in LIBRAS (REBOUÇAS, 2009, p. 43).

In this sense, the author points out situations in which the hearing teacher does not master LIBRAS and restricts the subject to theoretical questions about deafness and deaf people, not favoring satisfactory learning for communication between future





teachers or speech therapists with their students or deaf patients. She also indicates that some teachers, at the end of the course, invite deaf people to “show” their students some signs, not allowing time for interest in the language and its learning to materialize.

Similar to this saying, among the collaborators, DC Red highlights the following:

*There are some fluent hearing teachers, but most are not, they don't know LIBRAS. For example, a hearing teacher who knows little about LIBRAS is just basic. Like, 'Hi, I'm a LIBRAS teacher, I'm going to teach you', hearing students from colleges and just talk, don't teach and don't use LIBRAS! I know there are some, but most don't. Deaf teacher has perfect didactics and strategies (DC Red).*

On the other hand, HC Lilac points out that there are situations in which the deaf teacher goes to class “without planning, arrives there and does anything”, in addition to avoiding taking subjects and taking a stand against hearing teachers taking on the role.

HC Brown, in turn, considers that:

*I [hearing] speak, write, understand Portuguese very well, but it is not my profile to teach it. Even mastering my language since I was born, always speaking it, I won't be able to explain it to anyone and be a good Portuguese teacher, do you understand? In the same way, I can be a deaf teacher: I master the language, my culture is my language, but there isn't that thing about methodology, my class can be terrible and I'm great, I'm deaf, you know? So, fluency in itself does not guarantee - at the same time it is essential - because I can have good fluency, but that other knowledge, that it's the methodologies I can't connect, and I go there and teach a class that doesn't captivate, [does not achieve] learning success. The deaf teacher carries the way of being deaf, which he will take to classes, the hearing teacher will take another “tone” to the classes. The experience of being deaf has no comparison with me, it itself is an expression of culture. However, being the “owner of the language”, that is, having it as a mother tongue, does not mean being a good teacher (HC Brown).*

Faced with these statements, it is believed that we are facing a very delicate situation that should be treated with care, since it can fall back on the stereotype and, with that, the intentional exclusion of teachers with training and competence to exercise the function, in advance, because they are not deaf. Symmetrically opposite, the generalization that every deaf person will be/is a good LIBRAS teacher becomes dangerous and wrong if it disregards the skills and competences necessary for teaching and, more specifically, LIBRAS teaching. We share the position of Spessatto, Viella and Carminati (2020, p. 227) when they emphasize that “the knowledge, behaviors, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that constitute the specificity of being a teacher can be generalizable to all levels and modalities teaching performance”, in addition to transcending the different disciplines, that is, they are present in all of them.

There is an understanding that, in teaching, there is much beyond the domain of the subject, in this case the language, as the most important element for the performance of such function<sup>4</sup>. A restricted understanding can be considered a mistake, like the one carried out in the history of university education and which is still being tried to overcome, and, in a way, the deaf community is reproducing it with regard to the

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<sup>4</sup> The research collaborators consider the constituent elements of the teacher that are “required” in pedagogical praxis, unanimously, in the first place the specific knowledge of LIBRAS (use and grammar), education, history, culture and deaf identity; followed by the appropriation of the work context; the pedagogical tact and for methodological and didactic reasons.

teaching of LIBRAS. In view of this, we believe in the emergence of rethinking this action.

According to the collaborators, there are countless types of knowledge needed to teach LIBRAS, which permeate the knowledge of the language (use fluency and linguistic studies), planning, teaching strategies; know theory, but also practice and didactics; understand the specifics of language teaching as L1 (first language – for the deaf) or L2 (second language – for hearing), and the teaching context (levels and teaching modalities in which it works).

It can be seen, when analyzing the data produced in this research, that both deaf teachers and hearing teachers understand that just knowing the language is not enough to be a teacher of that language, which leads to thinking about other possibilities for the existing tensions.

Therefore, we look at this issue from the history of deaf education and the imaginary meanings established over time. Thus, it is inferred that the resistance established by the deaf community, in the current historical moment, reverberates the experiences of prejudice and oppression suffered since 1880, at the Milan Congress. There, the Sign Languages (SL) were “abolished” and oralism imposed as the only acceptable form of communication to be offered to the deaf, which demarcated many losses in different areas of their lives.

Carvalho (2016, p. 70) suggests that the attempt to demarcate the exercise of teaching LIBRAS only by the deaf:

[...] it begins as a form of deaf resistance, but is soon captured by the inclusion policy, in Decree No. 5626/2005, and added to this is the fact that many associations of the deaf have maximized the power of LIBRAS as a struggle for the rights of the deaf to access schools.

Therefore, it seems that there is an intention to establish an exclusive territory for the deaf community to act on. However, it is understood that any form of exclusion causes harm and a qualified teaching of LIBRAS is necessary to guarantee the exercise of deaf and hearing people who have specific training for such. The term territory is used in the sense expressed by Cunha (2010, p. 55-56) about which he discusses:

The territory has an occupation and this reveals intentions: in favor of what and against which it is positioned. From this perspective, there are no neutral territories. The occupation of a territory takes place in the confrontation between forces. When we occupy a territory with something, we are making choices that will fill spaces, take on the meaning of place and transform them into territories.

Therefore, it is clear that the territory is composed of places<sup>5</sup> filled with meanings. We look at this fact from the statements of Castoriadis (1982, p. 142), who states that “Everything that is presented to us, in the social-historical world, is inseparably intertwined with the symbolic”, and this is found first in language, but it is also so in institutions. In this bias, the author continues:

[...] a given organization of the economy, a system of law, **an instituted power**, a religion exists socially as sanctioned symbolic systems. They consist of linking to symbols (to signifiers) meanings (representations, orders, **injunctions or incitements to do or not to do, consequences - meanings, in the broad sense of the term**) and make them count as such, that is, to

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<sup>5</sup> Cunha (2010, p. 56) states that “the space is transformed into a place when the subjects who transit it attribute meanings to it”.



make this link more or less forceful for the society or the considered group (CASTORIADIS, 1982, p. 142, emphasis added by the authors).

It is noticed that the imposition of oralism was based on negative meanings related to deafness, the deaf person and “mimicry”<sup>6</sup> as a form of communication - the latter, in a way, a symbol of the previous ones. Furthermore, it marked the institution of a socially sanctioned symbolic power that forcibly denied the deaf the contact with the primary form of the symbolic - language - in this case, their own language. HC Green, one of the collaborators considers that:

*We hearers, we humanity, we have a cultural rescue for the deaf. Because in 1880, in Milan, we hearing humanity decided that they should no longer learn Sign Language (SL), that they had to learn the oral language (OL) and we promoted a cultural delay for these subjects and created a standard of normality that they didn't realize. Then they became “disabled”. We created a pattern of normality that created a pattern of deficiency (HC Green).*

Therefore, it is believed - although it does not intend to exhaust the discussion - that, in some way, the tensions of today are reflections of the previous ones. The impressions are based on the contributions of Castoriadis (1982, p. 147) when he states that “all symbolism is built on the ruins of previous symbolic buildings”, that is, the direction of the “camera” is changed, but the “focus” continues with the same setting.

Thus, it is indicated that, somehow, the occupation of the position of LIBRAS teacher by hearings can reverberate in the deaf community with a certain insecurity that past history will repeat itself. Corroborating this understanding, Castro (2016, p. 8) reflects that “their presence [of the deaf teacher] in the academic space represents a break in the prevailing power relationship for years, as the deaf becomes the main actor in the aspects that encompass the education of the deaf”, in addition to making it possible to strengthen the deaf teaching identity.

Certainly, there are some situations of prejudice in the hiring of deaf or hearing teachers, since there are reports of hiring hearing teachers at the expense of deaf teachers to teach LIBRAS, even if the latter are more qualified (REBOUÇAS, 2009). However, attention is drawn to another context: in many places there are no deaf teachers trained to teach LIBRAS, or even have certifications, but not approval in competitive examinations to take these vacancies, according to the narratives of some of the contributors:

*The test was all in SL. There was a test, I don't know if it can be considered a theoretical test, it has this name. A certain point was drawn from those 10 points [previously announced]. They drew the “language acquisition” point. You had so much time to consult your material, then you could, if you wanted to make an OL draft. Even because this written test, it serves as a basis for you to sign it, because it was all in SL, from beginning to end, and you also deliver it to the newsstand, which remains as a record. This test reading was all done in SL and filmed, mine and all the candidates. What happened? They [deaf competitors] did not know what language acquisition was. There were people who spoke about the Law; there were people who talked about inclusion; there was a deaf person who spoke of her trauma in being included in a hearing school in her childhood. They did not develop the theme of language acquisition. And everything always with two or three interpreters (HC Green).*

And DC Yellow complements:

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<sup>6</sup> Word used to refer to SL in 1880, when it was not considered a language.



*The lack of training for deaf teachers, the Letras/LIBRAS (L/L) program began in 2006, before only basic training courses for instructors. The deaf need to study more, some with degree courses take advantage and take PROLIBRAS and still fail PROLIBRAS, a large part. And those who have PROLIBRAS fail the competitions (DC Yellow).*

Therefore, it is emphasized once again that the historical issues of deaf education still reverberate today, among them the short time<sup>7</sup> of recognition of LIBRAS and its insertion as a discipline in the initial training of teachers stands out. Thus, there is still a shortage of qualified teachers to teach the language and, most importantly, few bilingual schools and many inclusion/exclusion processes in regular schools due to the fact that teachers do not know sign language and teaching methodologies suitable for deaf people.

Saúde and Lima (2021, p. 10) consider that:

One of the ways to ensure LIBRAS' space in schools for the deaf is to include the teaching of this language as a curricular component. However, in Brazil, studies on the LIBRAS curriculum and its experience at school are still incipient, despite the fact that the discussion of the bilingual education model for the deaf is already in the middle of its second decade. At the national level, few bilingual schools have a structured curriculum.

Considering that many of the candidates for deaf teachers in HEIs come from these unsatisfactory/ineffective school systems and, although they know LIBRAS, they are unable to teach it or to enter as professionals in Higher Education Institutions, there is a vicious circle that is more than time to be broken in all its "radius". This does not mean that it is being said that prior schooling is solely responsible for this process, but it is seen as a very significant factor.

Cunha and Franco (2021, p 3) suggest that "in inclusive environments, schools need to create strategies and actions that enable the learning and development of these students", which demands consistent and in-depth teacher training in LIBRAS, in the specifics of deaf person, in didactic and methodological issues. It is also understood that these factors related to teacher education are equally necessary for the context of bilingual schools<sup>8</sup>.

From Carvalho's perspective (2016, p. 71):

The inclusion follows Decree No. 5626, of December 22, 2005 for the implementation of the LIBRAS teacher position. It, however, does not propose LIBRAS as a language for teaching like other subjects, nor as part of the curriculum, but rather as a pedagogical resource. Pedagogical resource would be a way for LIBRAS to become a support for deaf students in special education, through contact with "deaf teachers" proposed by the education system, in an inclusion policy. Emphasizing the "deaf teacher" and not the LIBRAS teacher.

It can be reflected from this position that the possibility of the "preference" of the deaf teacher over the LIBRAS teacher is a strategy used by the system as a way to keep the deaf in regular school, promoting the emptying of deaf associations and not improving teaching and learning conditions for these students. Thus, what was born as resistance from the deaf community, through the Deaf Social Movement (DSM) in

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<sup>7</sup> Recognition in 2002. Inclusion as a discipline from 2005, in a staggered manner, requiring 100% to be effective from 10 years after the enactment of the law, that is, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that on August 4, 2021, Law 14,191 of 08/03/2021 was published in the Official Gazette, which amends Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996 (Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education National), to provide for the modality of bilingual education for the deaf.



favor of the recognition of their language and the conquest of spaces and possibilities, has been used in the opposite direction. In other words, as a form of demobilization for the illusory promise of quality education for all.

It is not being said that the importance of the deaf teacher as a reference in the identity construction for deaf children and adolescents is not considered, in addition to being a positive model for the academic advancement of their students. Considering the collaborators of this research, there are statements in this regard:

*The contact, seeing the deaf teacher, makes them (deaf students) think: I too can work, I can discuss politics, I can do various things, which they didn't know before (DC Red)*

*Teach people, share knowledge, demonstrate my competence to the entire community. Teaching serves for that, to progress (DC Beige).*

Based on these statements, it can be understood that being a LIBRAS teacher indicates the recognition of the deaf people potential, referring to the meaning of competence, knowledge, achievement. In other words, it once again overturns the historically repeated idea that deaf people would be incapable.

However, one cannot lose sight of the fact that being a professor at HEIs requires certain knowledge and training. In this perspective, HC Green states:

*[...] It's not enough for you to be a language user to be a teacher, you have to have the linguistic study, that's what I've always thought about my training. [...] whoever has to take on any professional position is someone who is competent to take on that position. [...] the time when anyone used to do it is over (HC Green).*

In this logic, Carvalho (2016, p. 94) observes that “The most intriguing issue here is the repetition that what would qualify a LIBRAS teacher would be identity and militancy. Carrying out the background to specific teacher training”. This means that it is not enough to be a listener who studies deafness to be a LIBRAS teacher, and it is not enough to be a deaf user of LIBRAS to do so, which leads to a necessary and urgent discussion on Teacher Education, and more specifically on Education of LIBRAS Teachers.

From there, fight so that the current legislation is duly respected and improved, as well as the discipline of LIBRAS and the rights to quality education for deaf people are actually instituted.

## **2 - LIBRAS, teaching and possibilities**

Decree No. 5626/2005, as explained above, among other things, defines the mandatory inclusion of the LIBRAS discipline in Teacher Education and Speech Therapy courses (BRASIL, 2005). It also indicates that deaf teachers from the early years of elementary school must be bilingual. It is up to teachers in the final years of elementary and high school to know the specifics of deaf people, and it provides for the hiring of LIBRAS interpreters/translators.

It is considered significant that the LIBRAS discipline was implemented in higher education courses without a minimum determination of its approach, not even the workload. Therefore, each HEI is free to determine what it deems important, having as a starting point for these choices the professional who will develop it, the same person who will probably set up the discipline's syllabus.



If this professional does not master the language or the legislation that includes it in these courses (such as Decree No. 5626/05, art. 22nd, which deals with the knowledge that teachers in bilingual classes must have), they will certainly be lacking with regard to language teaching, its linguistic particularities and issues of deaf culture, dedicating itself solely to theoretical discussions about the specifics of deaf subjects and their learning, for example.

Silva (2021, p. 7) comments on this, saying that:

[...] Decree No. 5626/2005 determined the teaching of LIBRAS in higher education, but questions were not outlined about the contents and workload of the discipline in undergraduate courses. Some guidelines for the topics in question are made in partnership with public and private institutions, published by the Ministry of Education and Culture - MEC, but it is still uncertain whether the focus is on LIBRAS' linguistic, pedagogical and/or cultural studies of education in deaf people.

Regarding how to resolve the situation of teaching theory and practice in LIBRAS, Rebouças (2009, p. 44) defends:

I understand that the teacher, whether hearing or deaf, must teach this subject in a communicative way, even if some topics on deaf education are briefly addressed to contextualize the importance of SL. In my view, the theoretical issues that permeate Deaf Education must be addressed in a specific subject for this theme, that is, LIBRAS and Deaf Education are contents that must be taught in separate subjects.

We share the author's thinking, since minimally learning LIBRAS is not something that can be achieved in a single 40-hour or 60-hour course, as is the case with most courses offered in HEIs. Likewise, working with deaf students included in regular classes, or even in deaf schools, requires knowledge about the specifics of learning for deaf people, their history, culture, teaching methodologies and assessment. Therefore, it must be thought out and structured taking into account this difference during their training.

Another factor to be considered, in the scenario of LIBRAS teaching, is that, as LIBRAS is a discipline with a low workload (option of the HEIs), administratively, especially in smaller institutions, everything possible is done to postpone hiring a professional who teaches it as much as possible, which sometimes leads to hiring the closest and most "income" for ignoring what the discipline and the professional represent in a broader historical and social context. Therefore, it is not possible to look at this scenario with naivety or generalizations, but rather with more research and theoretical and political strengthening.

### **3 - Continuing Education of LIBRAS Teachers**

Here, another confrontation pointed out by the research collaborators emerges, which is the continuing education of LIBRAS teachers, or rather, the scarcity of this possibility, as narrated:

*[...] where to look, this is a lack. So where? This I feel, you know, where are you going to look? (HC Lilac).*

*I know that the government offers continuing education courses, but very little of them are for LIBRAS. Other areas take many courses, but not for LIBRAS. Sometimes some cities present some proposals, for example, through the*



*municipal education department, some own project, but other places I don't know. There's nothing, I guess (DC Red).*

*[...] today there is a lack of refresher courses for this. So, except for events that will talk about teacher training and maybe it would have some work to talk about the LIBRAS teacher. Where we continue to talk about our role as a LIBRAS teacher is in our room here, in the hallways or particularly with a colleague, or when we hold a meeting of LIBRAS teachers, but so are courses to update us to talk about our profession of LIBRAS we don't have (HC Brown).*

As an alternative to minimize this absence HC Green and HC Brown suggest:

*A department that has nine LIBRAS teachers, both hearing and deaf, what space do we have to think about our training, and that's where we think, for us to hyper-criticism our own group: it's time for us to propose training for the LIBRAS teacher, as we do not have an update [in the city]<sup>9</sup> (HC Brown).*

*Research groups. Here we don't have it, I would like it very much. I intend over time now to form a research group for SL linguistic studies, that is my intention. This is a place of formation, the research group! The research group trains us, if you have an objective in that group and you have a theme that mobilizes those people who are there for the study, this is a place for training. So, my intention is this, I want to look for, together with other professors, to look for pairs of professors from other institutions so that we can make a group of linguistic studies of SL, because here we don't have it yet. So, I'm already thinking, I started to think about preparing to register with the GAP<sup>10</sup> and start calling academics, colleagues, to see who is interested (HC Green).*

Possibly, the tensions established and previously demarcated are promoting a distancing between deaf teachers and hearing teachers, which ends up weakening the teaching area of LIBRAS. Therefore, it is thought that the realization of collective efforts towards the establishment of new meanings in this territory and the joint construction of spaces and places for continuing education can be a strategy of resistance and strengthening of the area, since in all narratives there are affirmations of the need and valorization of such a qualifying process.

It is shared, in the same way as the collaborators, of Albres' (2016, p. 89) statement that "LIBRAS teachers, like any other professionals, need initial training, in-service training and continuing education" so that their practice is improved and the area strengthened.

On the path of continuing education, Penha (2017, p. 100) proposed Rounds of Conversations with/among deaf teachers, under the philosophical conception of the "self-experience" and "the technologies of the self", and highlights that: "Our intention with this research was to show that the Deaf who are Teachers can live beyond the deaf experience, and even redefine their teaching practices, enhancing the crossing of the deaf person in this process".

In her research, the author mobilized philosophical thinking in the perception and construction of the formative space of deaf teachers, which made it possible to understand that LIBRAS teaching goes beyond the "deafness experience" (PENHA, 2017).

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<sup>9</sup> Resource used to replace the name of the city in order to maintain the secrecy of the researched institution, as well as the collaborators

<sup>10</sup> Acronym used for the institution's Projects Office, where research and extension projects are registered before their execution.

In turn, Saúde e Lima (2021, p. 5) highlight extension courses as formative possibilities, initial and continued, for LIBRAS teachers in the context of the Federal University of Campina Grande – UFCG, “with a focus on teaching as a first and second language (L1 and L2)”, since 2013. The authors highlight that in 2018, based on the demands of previous years, they proposed the extension project:

Teaching LIBRAS as L2: training LIBRAS teachers", which was part of the Language, Literature and Training Program in Bilingual Education for the Deaf: experiences with written and signed textual genres (PROBEX/UFCG, 2018) [...] promote training of deaf professors and LIBRAS Literature students (deaf and hearing) for the teaching of LIBRAS as L2, covering theoretical and methodological aspects of their teaching and their textual genres (SAÚDE; LIMA, 2021, p. 8).

That said, it is understood that there is no longer room for disputes based on the condition of hearing or deaf, what there is a political, social and historical opening, achieved through the Deaf Social Movement - composed of deaf and hearing people fighting for the same cause (BRITO, 2013; DALL’ALBA, 2013) - which must be preserved and qualified so that it does not lose its strength.

Furthermore, “it is necessary to transfer teacher training into the profession” (NÓVOA, 2009, p. 17), rescuing the role of these professionals as authors of their knowledge and practices, and “there will be no significant change if the “community of trainers” and the “community of teachers” do not become more permeable and intertwined”, referring to the understanding that the theory about the teaching profession disconnected from practice becomes empty and vice versa.

In the same way, Rodrigues and Esteves (1992, p. 42) consider “the coherent and integrated involvement of institutions as diverse as a university, head of knowledge, and the school, head of teaching action, as an important factor in improving the training of teachers”, in this context the university institution itself.

It is noticed that the path of training the LIBRAS teacher, both deaf and hearing, still has some “knots” to be “untied”. Thus, as a way of better systematizing the findings, the following stand out:

Table 3 – Challenges, obstacles and future possibilities

Challenges	Possible Obstacles	Possibilities for future research
Productions with an absolute majority of collaborators being deaf teachers. The existence of hearing teachers is recognized, but not always positively.	Considering that the legislation that regulates the profession of LIBRAS teachers – Decree 5626/2005 – highlights the priority of filling vacancies with deaf teachers, including in Licentiate Degree courses in Letters/LIBRAS.	Investigate the reality of HEIs and their staff in the teaching area of LIBRAS, seeking to improve the area at the expense of the deaf or hearing condition.
Tension and distance between deaf and hearing LIBRAS teachers.	Indications of HEIs preferences by hearing professionals, disregarding what the legislation says (REBOUÇAS, 2009), an issue causes discomfort on the part of deaf teachers. On the other hand, hearing teachers question that being a language user does not guarantee teaching skills and abilities.	Develop in-depth and systematic research focusing on public notices for public examinations and filling vacancies for LIBRAS teachers at HEIs, analyzing the criteria for enrollment, structuring and execution of the selection process, until the hiring process is completed.
	Difficulty in approving public examinations by deaf teachers	Investigate the factors that disqualify deaf competitors





	when competing with hearing teachers.	from the selection processes for filling vacancies, in order to seek alternatives that minimize these results.
The need to not only be fluent in the use of the language, but also to know it in its structure and linguistic richness, at the same time as having the specific knowledge of teaching - in the same way that it is required for teachers of other languages as, for example, the Portuguese language itself.	The teaching area of LIBRAS is relatively recent and is developing and consolidating. We must remember that their inclusion in teacher training courses was mandatory in the same year that the first classes of Licentiate Degree in Letters/LIBRAS were opened – 2006.	Analyze their curricular structure in LIBRAS teacher training courses in order to always qualify the training process. I emphasize that in Albres' Thesis (2014) there is a very detailed and significant study for the area.

Font: Authors, 2021.

Furthermore, as it was possible to notice throughout the text, the distance between the deaf community and the hearing community in the course of the discussions and qualifying propositions for the training of LIBRAS teachers do not help in this process, requiring the institution of new meanings that promote the union of these professionals, in view of the urgency in qualifying the teaching of LIBRAS.

## Final Considerations

Referring to some considerations that this work provided, it is believed that it was possible to go through some knots, points and counterpoints about the training of LIBRAS teachers. From this, it was possible to understand that the training of the LIBRAS teacher still presents many challenges to overcome.

Significant advances were identified in the specific inclusion legislation that contemplates both the inclusion of deaf students and the training of professionals who will compose this territory. Thus, it is clear that there is legal recognition of the importance of the LIBRAS teacher's role for the implementation of regulations and for the development of deaf people in their educational trajectory and in the personal and social spheres, which needs to be implemented.

The data produced allowed us to understand that there is a legal priority for the deaf in the training of LIBRAS teachers, as well as in LIBRAS teaching. Despite this, they helped in the perception that HEIs still have some restrictions when hiring deaf teachers, alleging impediments in communication with other hearing actors. This fact demonstrates, in the present understanding, a simplistic and, in a way, excluding look in relation to professionals trained to carry out the pedagogical action, as they demand the presence of a LIBRAS translator/interpreter professional in certain institutional circumstances, indicating a concern more financial than quality language teaching and learning.

Furthermore, it is believed that, when traversing a universe crossed by meanings constructed throughout the history of deafness and of teacher education itself, advances and needs in relation to the theme are recognized. This work promoted a unique space and produced some meanings in the encounter of researchers, collaborators and scientific productions in the area. From this perspective, it could be seen that the teaching of LIBRAS in higher education, as well as the training of LIBRAS teachers and the priority of this professional being a deaf person, is compromised by



a still fragile basic education for the deaf, which needs to be revised for that its effects are maximized.

One has to think about the selection processes/contests of LIBRAS teachers so that they are actually fair and equitable, approving the best professionals, regardless of whether they are deaf or hearing. Also invest in the construction of spaces that seek to guarantee the rights of deaf people who, despite being anchored in legal regulations, still need investment for their implementation. In this logic, the training of LIBRAS teachers, whether they are deaf or hearing, can be a guarantee of the right to quality education with equity for the deaf.

Finally, it is hoped that this work has enabled a fruitful discussion that does not end in itself, but that awakens the desire to build new research, new meanings, which are very welcome in the education of deaf people in Brazil, which is still a path under construction.

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**Received: 07/10/2020**

**Approved: 07/02/2022**

**How to cite:** CORRÊA, L. B.; BRANCHER, V. R.; FERRÃO-CORDERO, B. Tensions and confrontations of LIBRAS teacher training in higher education. **Educitec - Revista de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre Ensino Tecnológico**, v.8, e146422, 2022.

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**Responsible Editor:** Iandra Maria Weirich da Silva Coelho

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